

Prop. The Church at Laodicea was Indecisive

Background

Laodicea was located just 40 miles east of Ephesus on the banks of the fertile Lycus River Valley in Asia Minor

It was colonized between 261 and 246 BC by the Seleucid king Antiochus II of Syria

He named it after his wife, Laodice, whom he divorced and who later poisoned him

It was a wealthy city because of its prime location on a trade route. It was a center for banking, trade and industry

In 60-61 AD, the city was so wealthy that after a severe earthquake, it was able to finance its own rebuilding. Citizens did not need government subsidies as many others did

They bred a special sheep that produced fine, soft, glossy black wool that was widely sought and admired.

It had a renowned medical school which produced ear ointment and eye-salve from Phrygian stones that were pulverized

Life was good and prosperous in Laodicea – At least physically and materially – But the church had some real issues from the Lord

Of all the 7 churches, this one was the worst. Even in dead Sardis, Jesus at least had a commendation for the faithful few. In Laodicea, Jesus had no words of commendation for the church, for any individual members, nor for the pastor!

I. The Lord's Titles

A) The Lord now comes to this church and addresses Himself 3 ways: **(v. 14)**

- 1) The Amen – “This is certainly True” – There is no sham or pretense in what He is about to tell them
- 2) The Faithful and True Witness – He tells no lies
- 3) The Beginning of the Creation of God – He has authority and power in regard to the church

II The Lord's Complaint

A) What was wrong with this Church? – They were indifferent about Christ (v. 15)

- 1) To be hot means spiritually to be zealous and on fire for the Lord
- 2) To be cold means to be unconcerned and unconverted

They were a church with no real vision, no purpose, no zeal – Jesus previously described people like this: – He who is not with Me is against Me, and He who does not gather with Me scatters.” (Matt. 12:30)

- 3) Jesus calls this indifference – Lukewarmness **(v. 16)**

They were not rebuked for promoting heresy and false doctrine – Nor for open sinners promoting all manner of immorality into the church

They held to some association to Christ – But not full heart surrender

This kind of attitude toward Jesus makes Him sick – Spit! (Vomit)

- 4) Why does Jesus detest this so severely? – Because it mis-represents Him before a watching world

a) Jesus had a zealous, hot faith that showed itself in the way that He lived

He entered the Temple one day when people were buying and selling animals for the sacrifice – He took a cord of whips and drove out the money changers and upset their tables – “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for house WILL CONSUME ME.’” (John 2:17)

Jesus was so earnest that He alienated the crowds that initially flocked around Him. He was so earnest that He went to the cross in the prime of His life. He would not compromise who He was or the Mission that He had come to do

- b) **Then** the world sees people who claim to be disciples of Christ sit in lukewarmness and indifference
- c) Compare this with what they see in other religions:

People see Muslims willing to die for their cause – Sending suicide bombers and ready to be-head anyone who comes against the cause of Islam

People see Buddhists who are willing to fast and consecrate themselves and deny their very living

People see Hindus live in squalor and poverty and sickness because their religion believes that to eat certain animals is forbidden

Compare this kind of zeal with in-different Christians!

B) How did it happen? – **Self-Centeredness (v. 17)**

- 1) They had gotten completely turned in upon themselves – **I Have Need of Nothing!**
- 2) Can you imagine a group of people IN CHURCH who tell the Lord they have need of Nothing! – This is the attitude of Unbelievers
- 3) Their selfishness came about because of their affluence – This is what prosperity can lead to
You can provide everything you need with your wealth – Just go buy it

Richard Wurmbrandt (Founder of Voice of the Martyrs) said that 95% of believers who face the test of persecution pass it. But 95% of believers who face the test of prosperity fail it.

C) In fact, it had so blinded the people **THAT THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT!**

- 1) These people were deluded with the worst kind of delusion – Thinking that everything was OK with God
- 2) When in reality everything was bankrupt!
- 3) This is the worst because people won't take any action to correct it because they don't see any need!
That is why Jesus points out their spiritual condition before Him (v. 17)

III The Lord's Counsel

A) In love, Jesus rebukes and chastens this church (v. 19) – Be zealous (boiling)

- 1) He wants them to get off the fence and make up their mind where they stand with Him
- 2) He does it so these people can experience true, living Christianity

B) The Lord graciously lays out for us the true path to spiritual life (v. 18) – Getting everything from HIM (BUY FROM ME)

This is the key to breaking the self-satisfied mode that they were stuck in

1) Gold Refined in the Fire

- a) Gold ore was heated in a vessel until it melted. – All the impurities were skimmed off
- b) The process was repeated until all the impurities were removed from the gold
- c) Purity was assured when the goldsmith could see his reflection in the metal

Jesus was telling them to let Him purify their lives from all the things that was drawing their lives away from Him – This in contrast to the gold that they had in their massive bank

2) White Garments

- a) Nakedness is a metaphor for sin, judgment and humiliation
- b) A white garment is one that represents righteousness

Jesus was telling them to repent of their sins and get from Him white garments that would cover their sins and shame – In contrast to the garments made from the black wool garments their city prided itself on

3) Eyesalve

- a) This is an ointment applied to the eyes
- b) In this case – It comes from Jesus to enable them to see spiritually – Have spiritual discernment
This eyesalve from Jesus is finer and more effective than that produced in the city

C) In the churches affluence – They had everything they needed – Except the One thing that they really needed – Jesus! (v. 20)

- 1) In their self-satisfied comfort – They had driven Jesus out of His own church!
- 2) How gracious that He even bids to get back in!
- 3) The invitation is for individual members to find a personal, living faith & communion with Christ

To get this living faith you must do 3 things:

- a) Repent of your sins
- b) Open the door of your heart and receive Christ within you
- c) Live in communion and fellowship with Him – **Dine with each other**

Have You Done this?

D) To those who will – Jesus promises gracious rewards (v. 21)

- 1) Overcomers who will do this will be exalted as rulers
- 2) They will move from the status of beggars (which they are at present) to kings
- 3) Notice that these rewards are purely of Grace – I will Give – Not provide for yourself
- 4) Jesus' counsel is to go from needing NOTHING from Him to needing EVERYTHING from Him

CONCLUSION

This church at Laodicea is the last of the 7 churches before the advent of the Great Tribulation – What you see in it is what will be in most churches at the time of the end

The warning of Jesus to this church is the warning to every church today – Including ours

If devotion to Christ becomes a shallow, religious pastime rather than a passion of heart, mind and soul: BE-WARE!